Bahamas Will Use Immigration Law to Bar Cuba Flights

The Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, Sept. 23—With U.S. agreement, Britain has decided to freeze out Cuba's attempt to establish regular flights to Nassau by quiet maneuver instead of a diplomatic frontal attack, it was learned today.

The trick is to be turned by stringent application of an order by the Bahamas government put through last January. It states that anybody landing in the Bahamas by sea or air, on their way to or from Cuba, "unless deemed to belong to the Bahamian islands is deemed to be a prohibited immigrant."

That, in effect, means that nobody can ride the Cuba planes, either way. The Cuban right to fly the route was established in a 1948 agreement between Breture and Cuba, before Fidel Castro came to power.

A delegation from the Bahamian government is in London now, negotiating with the British on the embarrassing situation this has caused. The Bahamas would like the air rights cancelled. But the British prefer to use the cold shoulder technique "prohibited immigrants" clause.

If that does not work, however, there will be new consultations with Washington and Nassau, and probably stiffer action.

But London is confident that it will work. According to officials here, the Cubans did not know about the regulation when they decided to start the flights. Now, they have been shown that they cannot expect any traffic on the route.

It is a demonstration, the British feel, that in diplomacy the shortest and simplest way between two points sometimes lies around an almost forgotten corner.